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FRIDAY JUNE 16, 2006 Last modified: Friday, August 12, 2005 11:42 PM PDT

Turlock Sea Cadets spend summer learning new skills

By Abby Souza

Most high school students would rather spend their summer relaxing than going through weeks of military training, but not the Turlock-area kids involved in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps.

Seven of the 18 Turlock-area sea cadets have been participating in training courses this summer put on by the corps.

Adrian Diaz Jr., a sea cadet from Delhi, just finished a two-week program at Parks Reserve Forces Training Area in Dublin.

"We did military stuff, push ups, pull ups," Diaz said. "It was fun."

Besides the physical stuff, Diaz also learned about Navy regulations, history and customs - like marching, saluting and bed making. He and the about 100 other cadets in the training program also did fire training on the USS Buttercup on Treasure Island and toured the USS Hornet.

"It was just like we were in the Navy," Diaz said.

The Naval Sea Cadet Corps is a national program for 13-17 year olds who have a desire to learn about military service. The program introduces students to naval life and allows those who go through the entire program to enter the Navy with a higher rank.

Like all divisions of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, the Turlock division is structured along military lines and is headed by a commanding officer. Turlock's commanding officer is Laneya Litterell, who runs the program out of the California National Guard Armory on Flower Street.

She has been with the Turlock program since 1996 and says it has been very successful.

"We have quite a few in the military now," she said.

Diaz's family has a history with the Navy - his father is currently serving in the Navy and his grandfather was in the Navy for 28 years. He plans to follow the family tradition and joining the Navy once he is done with high school and the cadet program.

Cadet Shawntay Sliger of Turlock spent the last week of June and the first week of July at cadet EMT training in San Luis Obispo. This was the first time the corps has offered EMT training, Littrell said.

"It was 15 days of 10 hour classes," she said.

Sliger passed the class with flying colors. Unlike Diaz, she doesn't plan to go into the military.

"I joined because I thought it would be a good experience for me, help me grow up a little," she said.

She said she plans to go to college to become a pediatrician. Littrell said the sea cadets program offers college scholarships to many of its outgoing cadets.

Farther up the Sea Cadet ladder is Jose Rodriguez of Delhi. The 17-year old served as a staff cadet at the same training Diaz attended.

Petty Officer Second Class, or PO2, Rodriguez was the highest ranking cadet at the training.

"You know how in the movies you see the guys up in front yelling at everybody? That was me," he said. "I had my own company of 32."

Other cadets from the Turlock division went or will go to cook steward, basic airborne and seaman trainings.

The Turlock division meets three times a month to do drills, study Navy regulations and take tests to move up the cadet ranks. The group also does a lot of community service events, including color guard duties in many local parades.

The Turlock division meets at the armory the first and last Tuesday of every month from 7 to 9 p.m. and the third Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"Anyone who is interested can always drop by," she said.

For more information, call Littrell at 648-5310.

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